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ON THE USE OF SOUNDING BALLOONS FOR METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS AT GREAT HEIGHTS.

Note by Ch. Renard, translated from Comptes Rendus, Paris, 1892, vol. 115, pp. 1049-54.

I have the honor to present to the academy a memoir on the employment of unmanned balloons for making meteorological observations at great heights; this note is a summary of that memoir.

If we could ignore all anxiety on account of the dangers to which the aeronaut is exposed in the upper regions, it would appear very easy for balloons to attain great heights. This facility is, however, only apparent. In reality, the atmosphere presents itself to us like a mountain whose slopes are at first very gentle, but change rapidly into a perpendicular wall.

For the sake of simplicity let us suppose that the temperature of the air is uniform and equal to 0°C , then by neglecting the feeble variations of g , or gravity, with the altitude, this would give:¹

$$y = 18400 \log n,$$

where y is the altitude in meters above the plane where the pressure is 1 kilogram per square meter. n is the reciprocal of the pressure, or the denominator of the fraction $1/p$, which expresses the pressure in kilograms per square centimeter.

¹ The fundamental differential equation for barometric hypsometry is:

$$dp = -wdh,$$

where w is the weight of a unit volume of the air at the given pressure p , and absolute temperature (T) and under the constant force of gravity, but the weight of a unit volume is as its density ρ and is connected with the pressure and temperature by the relation

$$pv = p \frac{I}{\rho} = \frac{p}{w} = RT,$$

where R is a constant, whence

$$dp = -\frac{p}{RT} dh,$$

assuming with M. Renard that the temperature of the air is constant and equal to 0°C , the T becomes the constant 273°C . and $RT =$ the constant $273\text{X}(29.2713)$. The integration of this equation gives us nap. $\log p = -\frac{h}{RT} + \text{constant}$.

When $p = 1$ kilogram per square centimeter the altitude is h_1 , and the arbitrary constant becomes $\frac{h_1}{RT}$, whence

$$\text{nap. } \log p = \frac{1}{RT} [h_1 - h]$$

or $h - h_1 = RT \text{ nap. } \log \frac{1}{p}$.

If ordinary or Briggs' logarithms are used, this becomes

$$h - h_1 = \frac{RT}{\text{Mod.}} \log \frac{1}{p}.$$